

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The international political landscape has changed in the past three years at a dizzying speed. Unimaginable five years ago, the United States is now the sole world superpower and faces threats to its national security that are much less formidable than those posed by the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the roles and missions assigned to the military services have remained essentially unchanged since 1948, when they were negotiated among the service representatives at a meeting in Key West, Florida. Several defense experts have recently called for a review of these established roles and missions, arguing that restrictions on funds for defense, coupled with the drastic changes in the national security environment that have occurred in the past few years, demand a reassessment of practices that are now almost 50 years old.

SENATOR NUNN'S SPEECH

In July 1992, Senator Sam Nunn, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, delivered a speech on the Senate floor that has since framed the debate concerning the roles and missions appropriate for each of the services.¹ Senator Nunn asserted that the roles and missions assigned to the services are not sufficiently well defined to avoid duplication and redundancy among the assets and capabilities fielded and developed by each of the services. As a result, the Department of Defense (DoD) spends billions of dollars every year fielding duplicative forces and purchasing weapon systems that are redundant.

Contingency or Expeditionary Ground Forces

Senator Nunn questioned the need for multiple divisions designated for rapid reaction or contingency operations in both the Army and the Marine Corps. The Army includes four divisions that are configured without heavy equipment so that they can be transported easily. All three of the Marines' divisions are designed to respond to contingencies. Without sufficient airlift to move these units from their peacetime locations to hot spots in a timely fashion, it may

1. Senator Sam Nunn, "The Defense Department Must Thoroughly Overhaul the Services' Roles and Missions," *Congressional Record*, July 2, 1992, p. S9559.

be difficult to justify retaining such a large number of units designated for rapid response.

Another issue that has been raised is the possibility of having the Army, which fields thousands of tanks and hundreds of pieces of large artillery, provide all armor and heavy artillery support for the Marines. The Marine Corps, encompassing three divisions in total, is much smaller than the Army, which fields 12 active divisions. Furthermore, since the Marines are designed for amphibious assault, their units contain small numbers of heavy armor and artillery. If the Army were to provide all ground forces with armor and artillery support, it has been argued, then the Marines could concentrate on their unique capabilities and not duplicate, on a small scale, those the Army already possesses.

Projection of Air Power

To highlight the overlapping roles of the services within the U.S. military, Senator Nunn referred to former Senator Goldwater's statement that the United States is the only country with four air forces. When discussing ways to reduce duplication in the tactical air forces, Senator Nunn mentioned two missions as deserving consideration--power projection and air support for the Marine Corps.

Power projection is the ability to attack targets around the world with conventional munitions. The United States currently has the ability to conduct such attacks using either land-based Air Force aircraft or carrier-based naval bombers.² Since the United States is unlikely to have to stage a massive attack on numerous targets that would require all of both the Navy and Air Force aircraft simultaneously, as was envisioned in the event of all-out war against the former Soviet Union, it may be possible to reduce duplication in forces fielded for this purpose.

The second issue addresses the need to provide the Marines with air coverage while they conduct their operations on land. Currently, the Marines have their own aircraft for this purpose. As has been pointed out, however, the Marines will invariably enter combat either underneath a general Navy air defense umbrella or as part of a combined arms operation with joint Air Force and Navy air coverage. In either case, some of the Marines' aircraft duplicate the capabilities provided by the Air Force and Navy.

2. As was demonstrated in Operation Desert Storm, it is also possible to attack land targets using cruise missiles launched from surface ships and submarines.

Helicopter Forces

In addition to fixed-wing aircraft, each of the services operates rotary-wing aircraft, or helicopters, with the Army's helicopter fleet being by far the largest. Seven years ago, the Air Force and Army chiefs of staff recommended transferring all helicopter operations to the Army. In the face of declining resources, perhaps such a transfer should be reconsidered.

Functional Organizations and Activities

Each of the services operates and maintains its own version of a common activity in several areas. These areas include initial training of pilots for both fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft; medical corps, chaplains, and legal departments; and logistics and support activities such as maintenance depots. Senator Nunn questioned whether such separate but duplicative structures are efficient and speculated that some consolidation might be possible and could save money.

The Senator raised these and several other concerns in an effort to broaden the debate surrounding the restructuring of the defense establishment in the wake of the Cold War. He challenged the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Department of Defense to initiate a far-reaching review of past and current practices. He asked that the services not continue to plan for a future force that, while smaller than today's, maintains the same configuration. Rather, he said, they should build a force that is less expensive than today's and is not bound by the constraints of roles and missions established in 1948.

RESPONSE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

The Chairman of the JCS responded to Senator Nunn's call for a review of the roles and missions of U.S. armed forces in his triennial report--issued in February 1993--required by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. In a published report, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell, responded by summarizing changes the military had made in response to the changing strategic landscape and outlining what the services would do in the future to address shifting roles and missions.

Justifying the Basic Principles Underlying Current Roles and Missions

The Chairman strongly defended the need for redundancy and duplication in the capabilities retained by the services. Specifically, his report argued that "the availability of similar but specialized capabilities allows the combatant commander to tailor a military response to any contingency, regardless of geographic location."³ The report likened the layered capabilities of the armed forces to the layered and complimentary safety devices in modern automobiles. Although redundant safety features might raise the price of a car, economics is not the only factor considered when purchasing or designing an automobile, he argued. This, too, is the case with U.S. military forces, General Powell reasoned, with history supporting the wisdom of having purchased similar but specialized capabilities among the services.

Although not explicitly addressed in General Powell's report, the military today might raise another broad concern about consolidating roles and missions. Many consolidations, especially those that result in substantial cost savings, would eliminate forces in one service and depend instead on forces in another service. As a result, the United States would have a smaller number of total forces than is currently planned. Further reductions in forces could affect the ability of the United States to fight two major regional contingencies nearly simultaneously, a goal of the Administration's national security policy.

Although arguing that broad consolidations of roles and missions are not desirable, General Powell did indicate that some changes have already been made and that others should be studied.

Some Minor Changes Have Already Been Made

The services have already consolidated some functions and eliminated some redundant and duplicative organizations. Most of these consolidations, however, have required only minor changes in the way the services do business. They include consolidating commissary operations in one overall defense agency, rather than having three separate service agencies, and consolidating several naval labs. The most significant consolidation has probably been in the intelligence function, which also eliminated some intelligence organizations. However, General Powell did not recommend action on many consolidations and changes in the way the services do business

3. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States* (February 1993), p. I-6.

that have been suggested by defence experts in the past. Furthermore, no major changes have been made in service combat forces.

Some Additional Changes Deserve Consideration

Although General Powell recommended no fundamental changes in current service roles and missions, he did acknowledge that reductions could be made in some areas.

Air Power. General Powell's report addressed several issues involving the air forces deployed by the various services. He recommended retaining the capability to conduct air strikes using either or both of the Air Force's land-based aircraft and the Navy's carrier-based aircraft. General Powell did acknowledge, however, that although the United States should retain all the types of air forces that it currently fields--those of the Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Army--the size of the forces could shrink as some missions are reduced or deleted or if certain missions performed by more than one service can be combined.

Recognizing the potential for change, General Powell recommended eliminating or sharply reducing the forces dedicated to the air defense of North America. This recommendation would affect the 180 interceptor aircraft now assigned to defend the continental United States from air attack. General Powell felt that, in the absence of a major threat for the foreseeable future, this mission could be performed by other Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps aircraft stationed in the United States. Thus, he recommended disbanding most or all units currently dedicated to this mission, or reassigning them to other parts of the Air Force.

General Powell also suggested changes in the structure of Marine tactical aviation forces. Although his report included recommendations for retaining some dedicated Marine Corps fixed-wing aircraft, it also acknowledged that during many Marine Corps operations, Navy aircraft would also probably be available. Thus, General Powell recommended reducing both the number of types of aircraft that the Marine Corps fields--from nine to four--and the number of Marine tactical air squadrons.

Ground Forces. General Powell's report did not include any suggestions for major changes in U.S. ground forces. It did conclude, however, that two issues deserve further study and that some changes merit exploration. In particular, although he emphasized again the need for redundancy between the ground combat forces fielded by the Army and the Marine Corps, General

Powell did acknowledge that the size of those forces might be reduced. The report raised the specific possibility of future reductions in the Army's light infantry forces, though not their total elimination.

Another issue involved the possibility of removing all heavy armored vehicles—including tanks and artillery—from the Marine Corps and assigning the Army the task of providing such forces when needed. General Powell reiterated the need for the Marines to retain their tanks, but acknowledged that there might be advantages in assigning the Army responsibility for providing all heavy artillery support for the Marines. He recommended that this course of action be the subject of extensive and detailed study to ensure that such a change in roles and missions would be cost-effective.

Helicopter Forces. General Powell repeated the need for the services to retain their individual helicopter fleets, asserting that each service has unique needs and missions for its helicopters. Some defense experts have suggested that it might be more efficient to assign the operation of all helicopter forces to the Army than to have each of the other services retain small fleets for general support purposes. Nevertheless, according to the Chairman's report, the services need their helicopters to perform service-specific tasks such as anti-submarine warfare, search and rescue operations, command and control, and medical evacuations. For non-service-specific tasks, such as courier service and transportation, General Powell recommended consolidating helicopter operations under one service in cases where many services operate in the same geographic area, such as Washington, D.C. He did not, however, recommend any significant reductions in force.

Functional Organizations and Activities. General Powell suggested taking several actions in the area of support activities, specifically maintenance depots and initial pilot training. He recommended against consolidations, however, in some areas where Senator Nunn had suggested changes might be possible, including the chaplain and legal corps.

General Powell's report addressed the issue of depot maintenance in some detail. It stated that depot maintenance is a large undertaking in the Defense Department, employing about 130,000 civilian and 2,000 military personnel at 30 major facilities as of February 1993. The services spend \$13 billion annually to rebuild, refit, and maintain more than 700,000 pieces of equipment at these facilities. The four services have devised this network to meet each of their needs in a protracted global war, independent of the other services' capabilities. General Powell acknowledged that, in a time when regional conflicts of shorter duration are more likely, the depot system can be reduced and restructured to achieve budgetary savings. As a result, he

recommended that the Department of Defense consider establishing a Joint Depot Maintenance Command and the possibility of closing 7 or 8 of the 30 military depots that existed at the time the report was published.

Another support area in which General Powell recommended consideration of serious change was initial pilot training. Each service currently operates its own training school for fixed-wing pilots and another for helicopter pilots. Initial flight training does not differ much as a function of service, however. Indeed, the Air Force and the Navy are purchasing the same trainer aircraft on which to teach their pilots to fly. After initial training, each service conducts advanced training courses to teach its pilots how to operate each type of aircraft peculiar to that service and to perform specific types of missions and operations. General Powell, acknowledging that duplication exists at many levels in the services' efforts to train their pilots, recommended that the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard consolidate their initial fixed-wing training courses and use a common aircraft for training pilots. He recommended consolidating advanced training for similar missions and studying the concept of consolidating initial helicopter pilot training at the Army's aviation school.

In summary, although General Powell did recommend some changes in the U.S. military, those changes did not reflect a fundamental change in service roles and missions. His report was more notable for its justification of duplication and redundancy of capability among the services than for its review of practices that are almost 50 years old. Although the report recommended consolidating some mainly support activities and called for the study of some changes in service missions--again mostly in supporting roles--it primarily endorsed the status quo.

Changes Made After Publication of General Powell's Report

The Administration's 1995 budget request for the Department of Defense reflected changes that the services have made after General Powell issued his report. In two areas--artillery support for the Marines and naval tactical aircraft--the services have altered their plans, in part to reduce overlap with other services. The Marines have canceled their plans to purchase heavy artillery pieces to support their ground forces and will instead rely on the Army to provide this coverage. As for naval aviation assets, the Navy is reducing the number of fighter aircraft that it plans to station on its aircraft carriers and is replacing them, instead, with Marine tactical aircraft. These two initiatives will reduce anticipated overlap between capabilities of the

Army and Marine Corps in one instance, and the Marine Corps and the Navy in the other, and result in greater efficiency and lower costs in the future.

QUESTIONS REMAIN

Some Members of Congress, including the Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, have called for consideration of more far-reaching changes. In response to such concerns, the Congress, in its bill authorizing defense spending for 1994, established an independent commission to study the military services' roles and missions. This commission, to be composed of private citizens appointed by the Secretary of Defense, will review service functions and roles, as well as the military support establishment. After a year of work, the commission will submit a report to the Congress setting forth its findings and recommendations concerning alternative allocations of service roles, missions, and functions.

The current fiscal constraints facing DoD provide an added impetus for a review of service roles and missions. Members of the Administration have admitted that the military's costs exceed its budget over the next five years by some \$20 billion. If, as some critics have stated, the present allocation of service roles and missions is redundant and wasteful, costing the Defense Department billions of dollars annually, then eliminating the redundancy could reap significant savings. In these times of fiscal constraint, it may be time to reassess whether the services need to continue doing business as they have for the past 50 years and keep paying for what may be unnecessary duplication.

Support Functions

Although General Powell recommended some changes and consolidations in support structures and activities, the changes were not far reaching. In the case of depots, his report recommended studying the consolidation of depots across service lines and establishing one Joint Depot Maintenance Command. General Powell did not recommend taking action, however, even though a previous JCS study of September 1992 noted that unnecessary duplication existed throughout the depot system, especially when viewed across service boundaries.

An example is the various depots for maintaining aircraft operated by each of the three services. With decreased force size, some excess capacity almost certainly exists within individual service depot systems. Consolidating

all aeronautic work under one service--such as the Air Force--would allow the facilities used the least to be closed, thus saving money in the long run. The amount of excess capacity within the services and the size of the initial investment needed to consolidate several depots are issues that need further exploration, however.

General Powell also examined the possibility of consolidating training activities, particularly those for pilots just learning to fly airplanes and helicopters. Again, he recommended some small initial steps and studying the possibility of more far-reaching changes. Issues that impede the consolidation of training across service lines involve different requirements that each service has established at differing stages in a pilot's development. For instance, Navy helicopter pilots must complete fixed-wing instrument training as part of their training to become helicopter pilots. These impediments to consolidation result from differences in service practices, some of which are based on mission requirements and others solely on tradition and past practice. More research is needed, however, before such distinctions can be made.

Finally, Senator Nunn raised the issue of consolidating service medical corps. General Powell did not address this issue, but recommended against consolidating similar functions such as the services' legal and chaplain corps on the grounds that it would not result in significant savings and would have a negative affect on the delivery of services. The medical delivery system within DoD, as elsewhere in this country, is undergoing profound evaluation and changes and may indeed be a candidate for consolidation.

Consolidating support functions would require identifying facilities that are not being used to capacity and should be closed, as well as facilities appropriate to house newly consolidated activities. Consolidating functions such as depot maintenance could involve costly transport of unique machines and equipment across country to new locations. Many consolidations, although reaping savings in the long term, might require investments in the short term. At the request of the Senate Budget Committee, the Congressional Budget Office is conducting the analyses required to quantify short-term costs and long-term savings associated with consolidations of support functions. These analyses of several support areas, including depot maintenance, pilot training, and medical care, are not yet complete and so are not included in this paper.

Conventional Forces

General Powell stressed in his report the need to have flexible forces that can be available to any commander wherever and whenever they might be needed. This flexibility, he felt, justified the currently redundant and duplicative forces within the various branches of the U.S. military. The ability to tailor forces so precisely, however, may not be affordable or necessary in the future. As demonstrated in Desert Storm, U.S. forces enjoy such superiority on an individual service basis that not even all those deployed to theater during that operation were used. Although available to the commander should he have needed them, U.S. forces in theater during Desert Storm demonstrated just the sort of redundancy and duplication that Senator Nunn addressed in his speech.

